

Water fee OK'd

Painesville residents will pay extra \$8 or \$9 a month

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After months of discussion and debate, Painesville City Council approved its infrastructure improvement fee at Monday's regular meeting.

Water customers will first see the effects of the fee when it's added to customers' water bills next month.

Customers with 5/8-inch and 1-inch water meters, which city officials said constitutes virtually all residential customers, will pay

an additional \$8 and \$9 per month, respectively.

Larger industrial customers' fees range from \$58 to \$175, depending on meter size.

Though the amount might be hard to swal-

low for some residents, the figure is a decrease from initial plans for a \$10 flat fee for all customers.

Additionally, council has asked city administration to draft legislation that would scrap an additional 4 percent water rate increase that had been slated to go into effect in 2012.

Council President Joseph Hada Jr. said following a study of the city's water distribution system, it was evident that fixing the problem would require more than just fixing

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a line or two.

"...We have to make about \$4 million of improvements to the water intake out in Lake Erie because that benefits everyone inside the city, outside the city or anyone who gets Painesville City water," Hada said.

Some members of council, along with city residents, had expressed concern that apartment-dwellers in the city will escape without having to pay the new fee in full.

Councilman Jim Fodor said he talked with apartment complex owners and said that the average price per resident

at some complexes will indeed be less than \$8 per month.

However, others with a larger meter size and fewer residents actually figure out to more than \$9 per resident, on average.

"There are some on both sides," Fodor said.

Ultimately, multi-family dwellings will be treated as businesses and the complex owners will determine what price is passed onto their tenants.

The infrastructure improvement fee is needed to replace about \$15 million worth of water lines throughout the city. City officials said some of the lines have been in service as many as 91 years.

City estimates show the fee

should provide the city with about \$1.2 million in each of its 15 years.

That money will go solely to finance water distribution system repairs as the city may not use it for anything else.

City Manager Rita McMahon said water line replacement will begin on Elm Street where the rusty water was reported.

"We've anticipated approval, and plans are already in the works," she said. "The project should be ready to go out to bid by the end of summer."

All council members voted in favor of the fee except for Robert Fountain, who was absent and excused from the meeting.